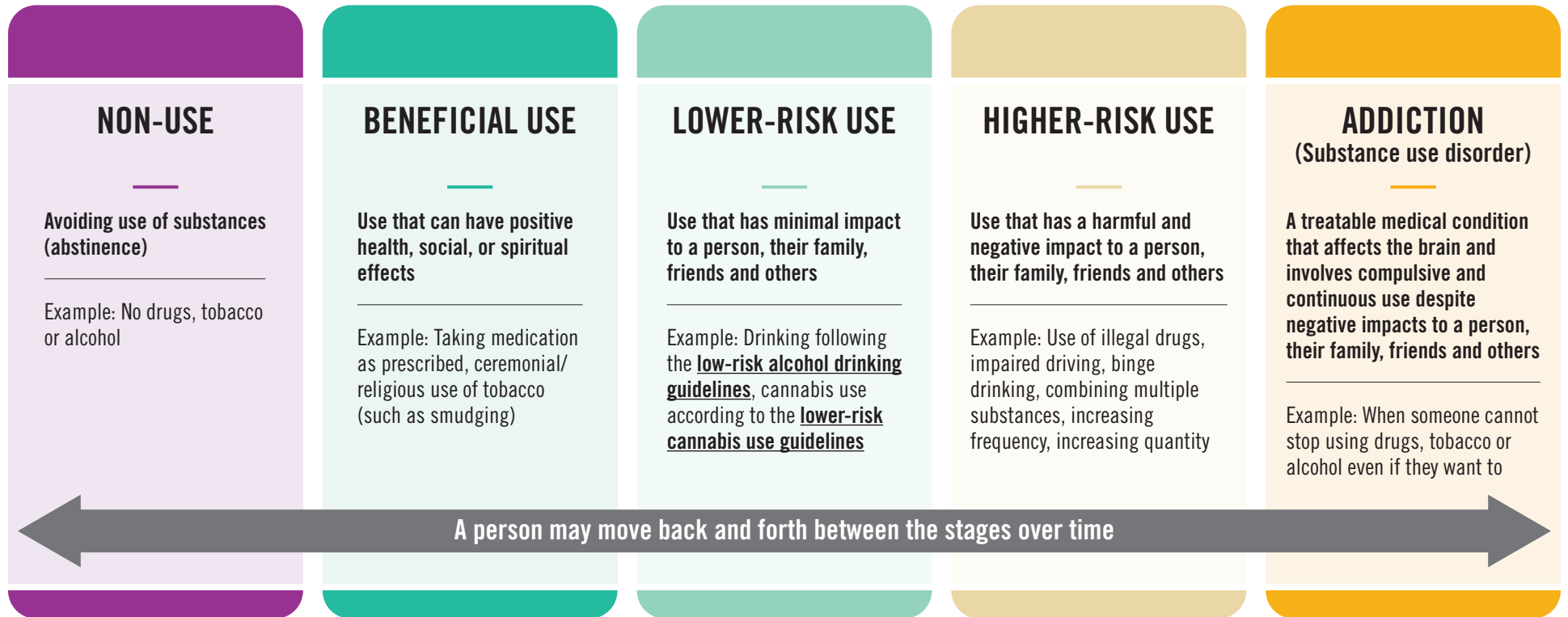


SUBSTANCE USE SPECTRUM

People use substances, such as **controlled and illegal drugs**, **cannabis**, **tobacco/nicotine** and **alcohol** for different reasons, including medical purposes; religious or ceremonial purposes; personal enjoyment; or to cope with stress, trauma or pain. Substance use is different for everyone and can be viewed on a spectrum with varying stages of benefits and harms.



NOTES

- Drugs, tobacco and alcohol have different effects on a person depending on factors like the substance(s) being used, tolerance, sex, age, weight, and any underlying health conditions, among other factors.
- The best way to avoid any harms from substance use is to avoid use. However, many people use substances without causing significant harm to themselves or others. In some cases, substances have a serious risk of harm at any level of use.
- Children and young adults are especially vulnerable to the effects of different substances because of the impacts on their development. In some cases, there may be no level of beneficial use or lower-risk use.
- The path to recovery from addiction is possible but it looks different for everyone. Some people may benefit from non-use (abstinence), whereas others may need different support, which could include medication, counselling, withdrawal management, and wrap-around services, such as employment and housing to support longer-term wellness.
- **Resources** are available to help people struggling with substance use. With the right supports, it is possible for a person to improve their health across the spectrum.